

**Docket ID FEMA-2008-0017**  
**Voluntary Private Sector Accreditation and Certification Preparedness Program**

**Recommendations**  
**of**  
**2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc.**

2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. would like to thank FEMA for the opportunity to respond to its proposals regarding the Voluntary Private Sector Accreditation and Certification Preparedness Program.

2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares worked extensively in 2005 not only in sending 3 staff members to establish the 2-1-1 center in Monroe, Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina but also in assisting many Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Wilma evacuees that evacuated to Pinellas County where many calls were fielded by our local 2-1-1 call center. In both these devastating situations, the power of 2-1-1 shined brightly in Monroe, Louisiana and in Pinellas County, Florida. Calls in both locations assisted people looking for basic information regarding lost loved ones, prescription assistance, mental health services, employment information, volunteer and donation information, filing insurance claims, FEMA information, SBA information, etc. Callers thanked both our staff in Louisiana and in Pinellas County for being caring call center representatives that were skilled in listening to callers health and human service needs and then giving them accurate information on where they could get assistance in such a devastating situation. After these experiences, 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. took a local leadership role regarding disaster preparedness of the local health and human service community with local community planners which included Pinellas County Government (Emergency Management and Health and Human Services Divisions), United Way of Tampa Bay, JWB Children's Services Council, State of Florida Department of Children and Families and the City of St. Petersburg.

As representatives of these community partners discussed our staff experiences from Monroe after their return, and it became clear that the human services sector as a whole was not adequately prepared to recover from a disaster and that the window of opportunity to educate and prepare them was at hand. With funding from JWB and the United Way of Tampa Bay, 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. hosted a 2-day Health & Human Services Disaster Recovery Plan Summit on April 5, 2006 and May 2, 2006 for Pinellas County non-profits. Approximately 90 participants from 50 health and human service non-profit agencies were present.

The purpose of the summit was to convene non-profit agencies to discuss important disaster recovery issues such as agency preparedness, disaster recovery plans and communication amongst health and human service agencies post-disaster. Participants were divided into 5 work groups: Domestic Violence, Communications, Mental Health, Children's Issues, and Aging Issues. Each group was to 1) Review scenarios; 2) Identify and prioritize planning issues; 3) Identify communication issues; 4) Identify available assets and 5) Assess risk readiness. This information was then shared with the entire summit group.

The outcome of these summits brought greater awareness for non-profit agencies that they need to be prepared, to have written disaster plans, and to work together to have an effective community response during a disaster. Based on these summits, the Pinellas County Disaster Recovery Leadership Network (DRLN) was born.

2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. is a core member of the Disaster Leadership Network (DRLN). The DRLN consists of representatives from funding agencies, government bodies, the school board, and health and human services agencies that play or could play a role in Disaster Recovery in Pinellas County. The mission of the Health and Human Services Disaster Recovery Leadership Network is to ensure that priority human services are made available to the public at the earliest opportunity should a major disaster occur in Pinellas County. This is accomplished by ensuring that health and human service

organizations in Pinellas County are optimally prepared for any major disaster; working with community partners to develop and implement plans that will ensure that Pinellas County residents have access to health and human services during long-term recovery from a major disaster; and facilitating coordination and communication amongst Network stakeholders during all phases of a disaster. 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc.'s role with the DRLN is to use 2-1-1 as the main point of contact regarding communication between the health and human service agencies, funders and the general community pre and post disaster.

Additionally, 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. has a standing Memorandum of Agreement with our local Pinellas County Emergency Management Department and we participate in the county-wide and state-wide disaster exercises.

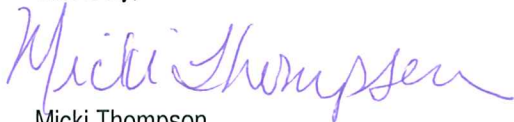
As an Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) accredited 2-1-1 service which supports the AIRS Accreditation Standards, 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. strongly believes in the need for national standards to secure consistency and quality. Within our sector, the AIRS Standards for Professional Information and Referral have been long recognized as the foundation of I&R service delivery. And within those standards, there is a specific section on disaster preparedness that continues to enhance our ability to respond before, during and after disasters. AIRS has submitted its own proposal which includes the latest copy of those Standards.

We urge FEMA to adopt the disaster preparedness section of the AIRS Standards as the voluntary disaster standard for the I&R/2-1-1 sector and to recognize the existing AIRS Accreditation Commission as the entity to certify compliance with those standards.

If you have any additional comments or questions, feel free to call me at 727-210-4240 or e-mail me at [mickit@211tampabay.org](mailto:mickit@211tampabay.org)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Micki Thompson  
Executive Director